

C/62/2023

Complaint regarding alleged cheating in examinations by a university student through the use of a smart watch.

By way of letter dated 28th February 2023, one Ms S.P informed the Office that a student, who had worn a smart watch during her examinations at a University, received a first-class degree and would thus qualify for the award of a scholarship. She requested our Office to “ask the University to conduct an internal investigation”.

Upon enquiry, the Ministry of Education, Tertiary Education, Science and Technology informed that the said student was not awarded any scholarship by the University and submitted an extract of the University’s Rules and Regulations pertaining to examination irregularities, including possession of any unauthorised materials such as smart watches.

However, no comment was submitted on whether any enquiry was conducted to ascertain whether the student had indeed worn a smart watch or if a check had been carried out before or during examinations. When queried further, the Ministry reported as follows:

- (a) Given the time that has elapsed, the tertiary institution cannot obtain the information as to whether the Chief Invigilator/Invigilators had checked each and every student individually regarding smart watches as this was not a normal procedure for the conduct of examination.
- (b) As per existing procedure, it is only if they consider that there is any anomaly that they carry out a thorough check of any student – e.g., suspicion of possession of an unauthorized material like mobile phone, written notes or smart watch, etc....
- (c) At first glance it is not possible to distinguish a normal watch from a smartwatch and thus it is not possible and practical to do such checks with each and every student for each exam session as it will disrupt the smooth running of the whole examination.

- (d) As per information available, for all the three examinations attended by students, the report from the Chief Invigilators/Invigilators did not mention any irregularity noted in respect of any student. There was therefore no ground to take any action against any student.

In the light of the above, the Ministry subsequently advised the University to consider introducing a ban on wristwatches of any kind in examination rooms and affixing one (or several) wall clock(s) in examination rooms for all candidates.

This Office wishes to underline that following an investigation in a similar case and being fully aware that different types of electronic devices including Magic Calculator V2, Livestream Wifi glasses, Bluetooth Pen, Smart watch, Smart phone Controller, Invisible watch, Spy Bluetooth ear piece could be used for cheating, a recommendation was made by this Office for the Ministry to identify all emerging issues regarding cheating in examinations and cheating deterrent techniques and to implement a standard policy across all Educational Institutions. The Ministry responded positively and informed that a Committee has been set up to discuss the proposals submitted by the Higher Education Commission, the Quality Assurance Authority and the Mauritius Examinations Syndicate in respect of the recommendation made and to come up with a policy to address cheating in Educational Institutions in Mauritius.